

Merchant and Nuuanu Streets --  
J. T. Waterhouse Building  
14 Merchant Street  
Honolulu  
Honolulu County  
Hawaii

HABS No. HI-55 C

HABS  
HI,  
2-HONLU,  
18-C-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20013

HABS  
HI,  
2-HONLU,  
18-C-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MERCHANT AND NUUANU STREETS COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS  
J.T. WATERHOUSE BUILDING

HABS NO. HI-55 C

Location: 14 Merchant Street, City and County of Honolulu, Hawaii  
Zone 2, Sec. 1, Plat 02, Tax Key #34

Present Owner: Shamrock  
(Property Manager)  
24 Merchant Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii

Present Occupant  
and Use : Storage

Significance: The J. T. Waterhouse building was one of several owned by John Thomas Waterhouse, a leading merchant in nineteenth-century Honolulu. The building served as a warehouse for Hawaii's first mail-order business.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1870s; 1911-1914. Fire insurance maps indicate a one-story Waterhouse warehouse, extant in the 1870s. Between 1911 and 1914, a second story was added, evidenced by fire insurance maps of those dates.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners:

1870s	J. T. Waterhouse built structure.
1902	passed to Henry Waterhouse Trust
1935	sold to Ed Towse Estate Trust
1961	sold to Stephen and Harriet Sawyer
1974	sold to Lin Cumitos and Assoc.
1977	sold to Merchant Square Associates
1986	sold to Roscommon Square

[Tax Records, Building Permits, and Historic Hawaii File  
"Merchant Square" publicity packet.]

5. Original plans and construction: The 1870s structure was a one-story brick building with an arched central narrow doorway and flanking windows. The roof line was a simple, steep pitch. [Fire insurance maps and historic photographs. See especially Album 12, Page 30, "B. Mus. 104, Gartley 196. Merchant Street, Honolulu, ca. 1890?" included in Supplemental Information.]
6. Alterations and additions: The 1911-1914 alteration consisted of the introduction of a second story, indicated by a change in brick mortar on the rear, and gable roof. The Merchant Street facade was stuccoed. Interior alterations are not known. In the 1970s the building was remodelled for use as a restaurant. [Photographs, B.F. Dillingham Fire Insurance Map, 1906 corrected to 1911, Sanborn Map, 1914 uncorrected, and Building Permits.]

B. Historical Context:

John Thomas Waterhouse came to Hawaii from Tasmania in 1851, and was a successful importer and merchant in Honolulu by the mid-nineteenth century. He owned several pieces of property in the downtown area, among them buildings on Queen Street, retail stores on King and Fort Streets, and a warehouse on Merchant Street. In addition, he was referred to as a "collector of halls," being the owner of the Lyceum and Olympic Halls, which he lent for lectures and assemblies. [Paradise of the Pacific, March 1904, p. 17; Scott].

There being no recognized coinage indigenous to the Hawaiian islands, in 1862 J. T. Waterhouse began issuing tokens redeemable only at his facilities. About the size of a silver dollar, they were of "white metal," one side bearing a portrait of King Kamehameha IV, the other bearing a beehive with the words "John Thomas Waterhouse, Importer" encircling it, and the words "Hale Maikai" ("good house") below the beehive. The tokens were worth fifty cents at Waterhouse's establishments. [Billam-Walker.]

Report prepared by Laura S. Alderman, Project Historian.

For background information on this downtown neighborhood, see HABS No. HI-55.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General statement:

1. Architectural character: This building presents a simple but strong facade to the street. The distinguishing feature is its Mission Revival type of parapet with its louvered oculus.

2. Condition of fabric: The building appears to be in good condition although it is being used primarily for storage at the present time.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 27'-0" along Merchant Street by 57'-3". There is a small shed-roof addition to the rear. The building is approximately 33'-6" high.
2. Foundations: Not visible for investigation.
3. Walls: The walls are of brick with stucco surface on the front facade. The sides are of exposed brick. The one-bay facade has three openings at ground level, two at the second level. Projecting belt courses at the second-floor window sill and head as well as foundation line articulate the wall.
4. Structural system, framing: Brick side bearing walls carry 2" x 12" second-floor joists 16" o.c. Roof structure is not visible but is likely the same.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The entrance recess is two steps up from the street level. The doorway is protected by a projecting canvas awning.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance is centered on the facade. The segmentally arched opening has a recessed doorway elevated two risers above street level. A paneled wood entrance door is on the right-hand splayed wall while a flush hollow core door is to the left. Both doors have stained glass transoms. There are fire exits at the rear of the building.
  - b. Windows, shutters: The first-floor windows have segmental-arched openings. To the right of the entrance is a double wood casement window with fixed transom; each casement panel has ten (2x5) glass panes. To the left is a fixed-glass window (3x5 panes) with transom. There are exposed brick sills. The second-floor windows are flat-headed and contain double wood casements (2x5 panes). The attic level has a louvered oculus with raised stucco surround.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: The flat roof slopes from front to rear. It has a rolled composition surface. The roof appears to be placed over an earlier roof, necessitating the raising of the front of the roof above the parapet.

- b. Parapet: There is a distinctive sculptured parapet in a Mission Revival style.
- C. Description of Interior: The building has been completely renovated. No original fabric remains.
  - 1. Plans: The first floor is essentially a single space. Along the right hand (Diamond Head direction) wall are a bar and kitchen. The second floor is a single large space to the front, a stairway and hall to the left (Ewa direction) and toilet rooms to the rear.
  - 2. Stairways: The stairway leading to the second floor is against the left-hand (Ewa) wall. The quarter-turn stair has 22 risers (3, landing, 19). An exterior fire stair is at the rear of the building.
  - 3. Flooring: The first floor has 4-1/2" square parquet blocks on concrete slab. There is an elevated and carpeted platform to the rear. The second floor has carpet over plywood.
  - 4. Wall and ceiling finish: The right-hand wall of the first floor is of exposed brick. The other walls have heavily textured plaster. The first floor has a hung acoustical ceiling. The second floor has a sprayed textured ceiling.
- D. Site:

The Waterhouse building is situated midblock on the mauka side of Merchant Street in the Merchant Street National Register district. The building is contiguous to the Yokohama Specie Bank building to the right (Diamond Head direction) and 1' away from the Royal Saloon to the left (Ewa direction). The building is set at the front property line. The building occupies its entire site; the site has neither landscaping nor outbuildings.

In this description, local designation is given for orientation. "Mauka" means mountain direction, "Makai" means sea direction, "Diamond Head" means in the direction of Diamond Head crater, "Ewa" means in the direction of the town of Ewa (opposite Diamond Head direction).

Report prepared by Robert C. Giebner, Project Supervisor.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views:

Bishop Museum Photograph Collection:

Files: "Geography. Oahu. Honolulu Streets. Merchant S. pre-1900", "Geography. Oahu. Honolulu Streets. Merchant S. 1900-", and "Geography. Oahu. Honolulu Streets. Nuuanu Ave. Downtown Area."

Album 12, Page 30, "B. Mus. 104, Gartley 196. Merchant Street, Honolulu, ca. 1890?"

Baker, Ray Jerome, Sketches of Old Hawaii. #31185.

Hawaii Directories, 1912-1924. Photographs of Yokohama Specie Bank [HABS NO. ] allows view of the Waterhouse building.

B. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

Hawaii Directories, 1880-present. Hawaii State Archives and Bishop Museum Library.

Honolulu Business Directory. 1889. Bishop Museum Library.

Maps: Lion Fire Insurance Company, 1879. Bishop Museum Map Collection.

B. F. Dillingham Fire Insurance Company for Board of Fire Underwriters of Honolulu, 1900, and 1906 corrected to 1911. Bishop Museum Map Collection and Hawaii State Archives.

Sanborn Map Company, 1914 uncorrected (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.), 1914 corrected to 1925, 1927 uncorrected, and 1927 corrected to 1951. Bishop Museum Map Collection and Hawaii State Archives.

Downtown Improvement Association Research Department, 3-9-1964. Hawaii State Archives.

Tax Records, Tax Assessor's office, 842 Bethel Street, Honolulu, Hawaii. Records for "Zone 2, Sec. 1, Plat 02, #34."

Building Permits, Municipal Building, Honolulu, Hawaii. #'s 107465, 32609, 78700.

Historic Hawaii Foundation File "Merchant Square" publicity packet.

C. Secondary and Published Sources:

Pacific Commercial Advertiser

5-13-1877

Honolulu Advertiser

6-13-1986

Paradise of the Pacific

12-1902, p.48

3-1904, p.17

Historic Hawaii News

5-1979

8-1986

Billam-Walker, Donald. "Money of Hawaii, Including a Preliminary Checklist of Hawaiian Currency, Coins, Patterns, Scrip, and Tokens", Annual Reports of the Hawaiian Historical Society. 1939

Bowser, George. An Itinerary of the Hawaiian Islands, With a Description of the Principal Towns and Places of Interest. 1880.

Scott, Edward B. The Saga of the Sandwich Islands, vol I. Crystal Bay, Lake Tahoe, Nev.: The Sierra-Tahoe Publishing Co., 1968.

Thrum, Thomas. Hawaiian Almanac and Annual. Honolulu: Black & Auld Printers, 1887, p.86; 1891, p.128; 1897, p.138; 1898, p.68; 1899, p.104.

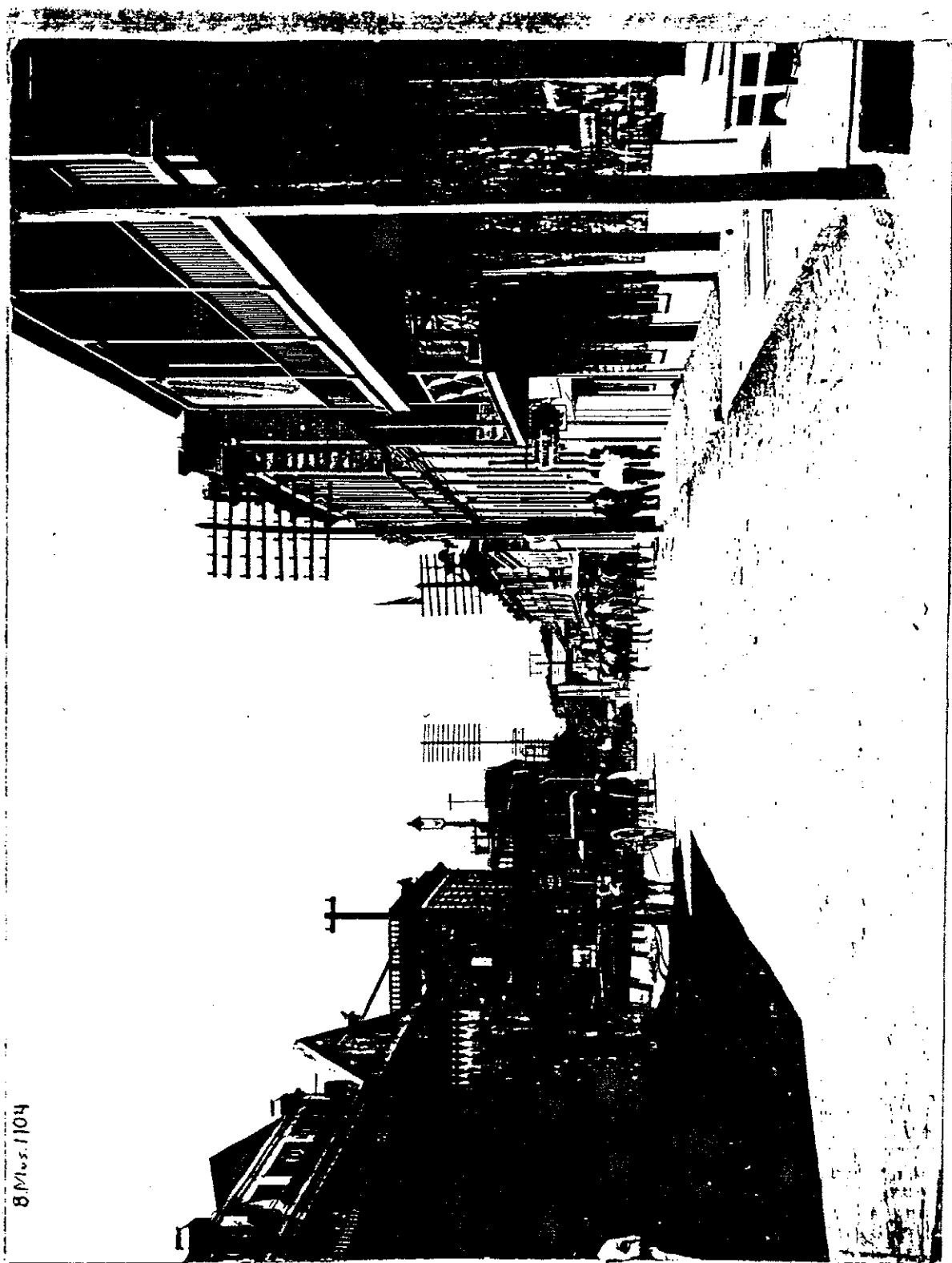
PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was jointly sponsored by First American Title Co., Historic Hawaii Foundation, and the National Park Service. Recorded under the direction of Kenneth L. Anderson, Chief of HABS, and Alison K. Hoagland, HABS Historian, the project was completed during the summer of 1987 at the Honolulu field office. Project supervisor was Robert C. Giebner (University of Arizona); project historian was Laura S. Alderman (Washington, D.C.); architectural foreman was J. Scott Anderson (Washington, D.C.); and architectural technicians were Coy E. Burney (University of Maryland), Kenneth R. Imoehl (University of Arizona), and Michel A. van Ackere (Brown University).

PART V. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Following is a photocopy of a photograph from the Bishop Museum, Album 12, Page 30, "B. Mus. 1104, Gartley 196, "Merchant Street, Honolulu, ca. 1890?" Neg. No. 1104. On the left, beyond the awning of the Royal Saloon, is the Waterhouse Building before the second story was added.

MERCHANT AND NUUANU STREETS --  
J.T. WATERHOUSE BUILDING  
HABS No. HI-55 C (Page 7)



B.Mus. 1104, Gartley 196. Merchant Street, Honolulu 1890